

## ***10 Benefits of Owning a Pet***



**Everyone has their own personal reason for owning a pet. If you've never given it the first thought or if you've considered the prospect, but haven't made the commitment, here are a few more things to think about. These are only ten of the many indescribable benefits.**

### **1. Pets Can Add Structure to Your Life**

Everyone needs some structure in their life. Owning a pet is a great way to add that element. Pets are entirely dependant on their owners for exercise, food, and health care. So having a pet will undoubtedly instill structure into your life and will set a steady rhythm to each day. Regular walks, a feeding schedule, annual licensing and vaccinations for your pet will keep you on task. Morning walks are a good example of how pets keep you motivated. Regular walks and exercise can help curb unwanted behavior. The last thing you want to do is to come home from a long day and find a "surprise" on your oriental rug or that your sofa was used as a chew toy. So you do what's best and get out and walk your pal.

### **2. Pets Are Date Magnets**

Dogs are great for making love connections. Forget Internet matchmaking — a dog is a natural conversation starter. Walking a dog can make you more approachable and give people a reason to stop and talk. Dogs have a tendency to ease individuals out of social isolation or shyness. Sometimes the conversation stays on "dog level," sometimes it becomes a real social interchange.

### **3. Pets Can Improve Your Mood**

For those who love animals, it's basically impossible to stay in a bad mood when a pair of loving puppy eyes meets yours, or when a super-soft cat rubs up against your hand. Studies support the mood-enhancing benefits of pets and their ability to ease depression.

### **4. Pets Encourage You to Get Out And Exercise**

Playing with pets is in the top ten physical activity choices for children and families; owning a dog may encourage children to exercise and help reduce childhood obesity. Also an American study showed that patients who owned a pet had a much better chance of surviving for more than a year after a heart attack — a difference that could not be attributed to just extra exercise.

### **5. Pets Control Blood Pressure Better Than Drugs**

Yes, it's true. While ACE inhibiting drugs can generally reduce blood pressure, they aren't as effective with controlling spikes in blood pressure due to stress and tension. However, a study group of hypertensive executives who got dogs or cats were found to have lower blood pressure and heart rates than those who didn't get pets. When their counterparts in the non-pet group heard the results, most of them went out and got pets!

## **6. Pets Can Improve Family Bonds**

Anyone who owns a pet knows that a pet quickly becomes a member of the family. As such, the family addition under the dinner table has tremendous benefits for you and the whole family.

Pets are great stress-busters in domestic situations — a good dog has a way of intervening when tensions rise. In addition to teaching compassion, responsibility and nurturing behavior, pets also make great playmates for the kids. Ultimately though, at the end of the day a pet won't judge you by your mood, hairdo or anything else for that matter. That's true unconditional love.

## **7. Pets Are Allergy Fighters**

It was once thought that kids who were raised in a home with dogs and cats were more likely to develop pet allergies and asthma. However, a growing number of researchers have suggested that kids growing up in a home with "furred animals" — whether it's a pet cat or dog, or on a farm and exposed to large animals — will have less risk of allergies and asthma.

Scientists analyzed the blood of babies immediately after birth and one year later. They were looking for evidence of an allergic reaction, immunity changes, and for reactions to bacteria in the environment. If a dog lived in the home, infants were less likely to show evidence of pet allergies — 19 vs. 33 percent. In addition, they had higher levels of some immune system chemicals — a sign of stronger immune system activation.

## **8. Pets Stave Off Loneliness and Provide Unconditional Love**

Pets can be there for you in ways that people can't. They can offer love and friendship, and can also enjoy comfortable silences, keep secrets and are distinguished snugglers; and they could be the best antidote for loneliness. Actually, studies show that nursing home residents reported less loneliness when visited by dogs than when they spent time with other individuals!

## **9. Pets Can Reduce Stress — Sometimes More Than People**

While we all know the power of talking about your problems with a good buddy who's also a good listener, researchers found that spending time with a pet may be even better! Recent research shows that, when conducting a task that's stressful, people actually experienced less stress when their pets were with them than when a supportive friend or even their spouse was present!

## **10. Pets for the Aged**

Research shows that Alzheimer patients have fewer anxious outbursts if there is an animal in the home. Their caregivers also feel less burdened when there is a pet, especially if it is a cat, which normally requires less care than a dog.

Walking a dog or just caring for a pet — for elderly people who are able — can provide important exercise and companionship.

For more information please call: Metro Animal Services at 361-1318 or go to [www.Louisvilleky.gov/AnimalServices](http://www.Louisvilleky.gov/AnimalServices)

